

MEDIA RELATIONS

Media can be a valuable tool in reaching a critical goal – effectively positioning your campaign to the general public. It is imperative that local media be utilized to help increase visibility and recall of key messages about storage, safe use and proper disposal of HHW. Using the media is advantageous because people believe that they are generally fair and objective, and trust what they say. Having stories that support your message appear in the local/regional media in your community will help build public awareness about HHW.

GETTING IN THE NEWS

The first thing to remember in your media outreach efforts is that reporters, program directors and editors need stories. They are continually looking for topical and substantive issues to cover in a new and interesting way. As a result, there is a tremendous opportunity to communicate messages about HHW.

When working with local reporters, make your story ideas as timely as possible and be sure they have clear local impact. The media generally judge stories by their timeliness, importance and local effect; as well as how much suspense, human interest and conflict are involved.

What is News?

- An account of an event
- What happens to people
- Anything new learned today
- Information people need

Following are potential media angles to consider when developing your story ideas:

Potential Media Angles:

- ◆ Publicize HHW local promotions, school competitions, community cleanups or other local environmental/community-based events or activities
- ◆ Identify household hazardous products that are characterized as HHW
- ◆ Environmental problems associated with improper disposal of HHW
- ◆ The role and schedule of local collection events (Roundups and Hazmobiles)
- ◆ Availability of other disposal options (e.g. local used oil recycling centers)
- ◆ Seasonal triggers reminding residents about the HHW products in their home (e.g. messages about pesticides/fertilizers during the spring planting/gardening season)
- ◆ Links between HHW and family health, identifying potential hazards and risks (e.g. sniffing and huffing of inhalants)
- ◆ Information about alternative products and other source reduction techniques
- ◆ Positioning the 1-888-CLEAN-LA hotline and www.888cleanla.com Web site as centralized resources for environmental information
- ◆ HHW promotions, competitions and events resulting from corporate, business and community partnerships

Criteria for how media evaluates value of news:

- **Impact/consequence** – How many people an event or idea affects and how seriously it affects them determines its importance as news. So does the extent to which the information may be useful to their audience. Does anybody care?
- **Proximity/locality** – Usually, the same happening is bigger news if it happens in the media's area than if it's 1,000 miles away.
- **Timeliness** – Today's news may be stale tomorrow. However, some issues of great impact are timeless. So the best time to tell an important story is as soon as possible.
- **Prominence** – Names don't always make news. Still, happenings that involve well-known people or institutions are likely to be interesting even if not important.
- **Novelty/drama** – The unusual makes news. Firsts make news. Bizarre makes news. "When a dog bites a man, that is not news because it happens so often. But, if a man bites a dog, that's news."
- **Conflict** – Most reporters spend most of their time covering conflict – whether wars, politics, crime or sports. Conflict is both a contributing and complicating factor in news. Usually present, it is often hard to understand and hard to describe.

COMPILING MEDIA LISTS

When compiling a list of your local media outlets, be sure to include both print (newspapers and local magazines) and electronic (television and radio news programs) media in the general and environmental markets. Ethnic media is important as well based on the demographics of Los Angeles County. And don't forget alternative media: magazines and newsletters published by groups such as your local chamber of commerce, community service organizations, unions and health care organizations.

Stories about HHW can be pitched to a variety of editors or reporters, including city editors, health editors and reporters who cover environmental-related issues.

APPROACHING MEDIA SOURCES

The most valuable ways to communicate with media include: news release, pitch letter and media advisory. Each of these tools is absolutely necessary to effectively work with the media. A reporter relies on these items when deciding what stories to cover. Therefore, it is critical that you create the most effective media materials when communicating with local reporters.

Evaluate your story to determine who would be most likely to want to cover it. Next, make sure to send your pitch letter, news release or media advisory to the right person. In general, you should call your local media and find out the name and phone number of the person in the following positions:

- TV – Planning/Assignment Editor
- NEWSPAPER – City Desk or Editor, Environmental Reporter
- RADIO – Assignment Editor or News Desk

However, if you decide that your story would fit better in another section of the newspaper (such as the health section), call the newspaper and confirm the name and title of the appropriate editor or reporter.

ESSENTIAL MEDIA TOOLS

**Samples of each of these tools are attached for further reference*

◆ News Releases

One of the most basic and important means of publicity is the news release. News releases are announcements to the media. They are “ticklers” designed to interest reporters to take on a story. They should be released only when you are announcing new information, new facts, milestone accomplishments of a program or the availability of new HHW services or programs. The news release should be concise (no more than three pages), factual and include relevant quotes from a program spokesperson. The news release should state your news clearly and be written like a news article.

Four tips for writing a news release:

- TIP 1 Define your purpose.** What message do you want to send to the community about HHW?
- TIP 2 The five W s.** Before you write the release, identify the basics: who, what, when, where, why and how.
- TIP 3 Details.** Write down other key points, such as background information on HHW and your organization.
- TIP 4 Be sure to include:**
 - *Identification.* Identify the organization issuing the release. Include the contact name and phone number.
 - *Quote.* Include a brief, interesting quote from your main spokesperson.
 - *Description of your organization.* This information should appear near the end of the release.

◆ Media Advisories

A media advisory is used to alert print and electronic media about your event. It is different than a news release because it only gives basic information. The media advisory has a sense of urgency and should be concise and targeted to specific media. The advisory should include enough information to spark interest, but not so much that it gives away your story. The advisory is sent a day or two before an event to serve as an initial interest grabber and to ensure media attendance at the event.

Always be sure to include in a media advisory:

- **Contacts.** Identify contacts with their phone numbers. Contacts should be available at all times to answer questions and provide additional information.
- **The five W s.** Concisely identify the basics: who, what, when, where, why and how.
- **Interview or photo opportunities.** If it is appropriate, identify a time and place for interview and/or photo opportunities. Reporters have a tight schedule to cover events. If the event is all day, make sure you have a designated time for interviews with the press. Make sure you have a visually pleasing place for photo opportunities.

◆ **Pitch Letter**

Pitch letters or solicitation letters are the “hard sell” written communication to a media contact. These are used to sell a reporter an idea – usually for a feature story – and not to invite or announce.

◆ **Letters to the Editor /Op-Ed Articles**

An excellent way to reach opinion leaders and educate your community about HHW is to submit “letters to the editor” and opinion editorials to your local newspapers. “Letters to the editor” are written in response to specific news articles or a publication’s coverage of a particular issue or news event. Opinion editorials (op-ed) are written to frame and position specific issues from a particular point of view, and are not a direct response to an article. However, the subject of the op-ed must be timely and of relative importance to the newspaper’s readers. For maximum impact, both “letters to the editor” and op-ed articles should be signed by a senior member of your organization.

Your editorials and letters should be written in the same fashion as a news release, with the most important information at the beginning of the letter. The letter should be factual. Support statements with localized statistics or facts whenever possible. They should always be short and to the point.

Before submitting your editorial or letter, call the newspaper to determine its guidelines for op-ed articles and “letters to the editor,” and find out the name and title of the person who receives this information.

Five tips to write a letter to the editor:

- TIP 1 Guidelines and formats.** Call your local paper to inquire about guidelines on length, deadlines and whether the letter will be edited
- TIP 2 Length.** Editors will likely choose a few short letters rather than a long one. Be brief.
- TIP 3 Don’t procrastinate.** Write immediately when you see a topic that catches your eye, or one that can be tied in with HHW or related environmental issues.
- TIP 4 Stick to the issue.** Avoid partisan or divisive remarks.
- TIP 5 Avoid form letters.** Don’t send generic letters. Editors are less likely to print them.

Five tips to write an op-ed:

- TIP 1 Offer a forceful opinion.**
- TIP 2 Provide well-documented, well-researched facts and arguments.**
- TIP 3 Make sure your essay adds to the public’s knowledge of issues.**
- TIP 4 Provide insight on issues that are relevant to the local area.**
- TIP 5 Make sure the essay is clear, organized, interesting and filled with concise facts.**

◆ **Canned Articles**

Sending a local publication a pre-written or “canned” article can encourage reporters to cover your issue. Be forewarned – media outlets often use submitted articles as sources of information to develop their own story – don’t expect the article to be published in its entirety. The three articles attached may be submitted to a media outlet for publication or may be provided to a reporter as additional information regarding household hazardous waste.

Remember: Magazines and other monthly publications require a generous leadtime – sometimes months in advance. Be sure to contact the publication to determine submission deadlines.

TIMING EVENT VS. ISSUE

Timing the distribution of a media alert or pitch letter depends on whether you are seeking coverage for an event (such as a community cleanup event) or hoping that media will pick up a story about your issue (such as a story about an innovative HHW community program).

If you are notifying the media of an event, send out a media alert three or four days before the event. Follow up with reporters or editors one to two days before the event to confirm whether they will be attending. Reporters work on a short lead-time, so it’s not a good idea to send information about your event weeks in advance.

If you are pitching a story angle about your issue, send a pitch letter that includes the timing of your follow-up call. For instance, “I will call you on Wednesday to discuss this story idea further.” Then, be sure to call when you say you will call. Because your story is not “time sensitive” – does not have to run at a particular time – it may take weeks or months before you see a story. You should not expect your article to be in the next day’s paper or on the evening news.

MEDIA FOLLOW-UP

Following up with media on the phone is appropriate and often necessary to ensure coverage, but don’t hound them. Avoid calling when you know they are working on a deadline. Generally, do not call daily newspapers after 3 p.m. and avoid calling weeklies Thursday afternoon. Radio and TV deadlines vary, but avoid calling during the half-hour before a major news broadcast. Mornings are best for both electronic and print.

Know your subject matter and be clear and concise when you talk to the reporter, editor or news director. And be familiar with the media outlet you are calling to pitch – know what kinds of stories they typically run.

If a reporter calls you, respond immediately. If you meet a reporter’s deadline, you will probably be called again. If the reporter asks you questions you cannot answer, say that you will find the information and call back promptly. Make sure to ask about the reporter’s deadline.

MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Creating persuasive messages and delivering them in a compelling manner can enhance your ability to reach your program's overall goals and objectives. Knowing what you want to say is the first step in message development. Deciding how to say it – framing the message – is the second. Framing your messages (or “talking points”) is a way to put your information into a context that will make it meaningful, understandable and interesting to your audience.

Identify your audience

Learn all you can about your target audience (e.g. “Neat Neighbors” and “Fix-It-Foul-Ups”). Ask these questions:

- Who are they?
- What is their age, gender, income level, education level, geographic location, occupation, family size, ethnicity, etc.? (Demographics)
- What do they like? What motivates them? What offends them?
- Where do they get their information? (What local media do they watch, read, listen to? What are their other sources of information?)
- Why should they care about your messaging?

Neat Neighbors

Fifty-percent of Los Angeles County's population, or 4.5 million adults, are “Neat Neighbors” – friends of the environment who recycle regularly and take pride in keeping their neighborhoods clean and neat. They have a strong desire to “do the right thing” and will change their polluting behavior if given simple alternative actions.

Fix-It Foul-Ups

“Fix-It Foul-Ups” are avid do-it-yourselfers who make up 13 percent of the County's population, or 1.2 million adults. They are responsible for a disproportionate share of pollution from activities related to working on their cars, homes and gardens. They have good intentions and are very receptive to modifying their behaviors.

Take cultural differences into account

Los Angeles County is comprised of many ethnicities and cultures. Research clearly indicates that one's cultural orientation may profoundly influence how certain messages will be received.

The solution is to bring together colleagues who are knowledgeable about a particular culture and ask them:

- Is there anything in this message you think would not be well received by this cultural group?
- Is there a way of saying this that would increase its effectiveness?
- What would be the best vehicle for delivering these messages?

Consider the public's interest

Statements about what is good for “society” are not usually as effective as more personal messages. People are most likely to respond to messages that answer the question: “Why does this matter to me?” The information you have gathered in identifying your audiences will help you answer this question.

State your key messages first

Assume that you will have time to deliver just three key message points. Time is of the essence – your listeners may not have the time to hear details. The most important facts should come first. Explanations of main points are important, but not the priority.

Keep your messages simple

People who are experts about a particular issue often make the mistake of assuming that everyone else shares their interest in the issue. They risk losing the attention of their audience by:

- Using jargon
- Trying to deliver messages that are too complex – the language of your messages should be reduced to an eighth grade comprehension level, the level at which most newspapers and magazines are written.

Make your message quotable

Keep your key messages short and repeat them often.

Use facts and figures to back up your message points

The use of accurate, verifiable data can add credibility to your message.

Practice, practice, practice

Review your messages or talking points before making any announcement or speaking to the media. You should be so familiar with your talking points that you can remember and repeat them even if you are nervous or flustered during an interview.

SPOKESPERSON TIPS

Use the following tips when presenting your key messages in interviews and presentations:

- ◆ **Be prepared and knowledgeable.** Be sure you have defined your agenda for the interview, presentation or meeting, and that you know your subject matter. Prior to the meeting, write down your main messages and memorize a few statistics or examples to support your messages.
- ◆ **Give your main message point first in a concise, positive, complete sentence.** Illustrate your point whenever possible with a few brief statistics or interesting real-life anecdotes. Follow with two or three of your other major message points, but don't attempt to make too many points in one interview.
- ◆ **Keep answers as concise and focused as possible,** but not so brief as to be uninformative or appear evasive. Avoid one- or two-word responses, but also, don't ramble or go off on tangents.
- ◆ **Position yourself as an expert source.** Make sure that your credentials and years of experience are known.
- ◆ **Use your organization's name whenever possible** instead of generic pronouns, such as "we."
- ◆ **Always tell the truth.** Be as direct and concise as possible when answering questions. Don't give out information that you think may be true; it could cause embarrassment if discovered later to be false. Say "I don't have the answer now..." and get back with additional information if possible.
- ◆ **Assume everything is on the record.** Assume everything you say will be used in a news story. Even the way you decline to answer can convey information to a reporter.
- ◆ **Keep your audience in mind.** Avoid slang/technical jargon that the audience will not understand.
- ◆ **Keep your cool.** Do not be ruffled or upset by questions. Keep control of the interview or presentation; politely correct misinformation and do not allow yourself to become defensive.
- ◆ **Don't repeat a negative question in your answer.** Use positive words with which you feel comfortable.
- ◆ **Don't try to fill up a silence.** When finished answering a question, wait for the next one.
- ◆ **Assist the reporters.** Help put reporters in touch with experts. Make an extra effort to give them background or additional materials. Make sure you provide the information they need in a timely fashion. If you do not have something they need, tell them when you can get it to them or refer them to where they can find it.

Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: *(Contact name)*
(Contact number)

Got Some Paint to Get Rid of? Tired of that Nail Polish? Have a Box Full of Old Cleaning Supplies? Need to Get It Out of Your House?

Participate in Los Angeles County's Free Household Hazardous Waste Roundup in (City) on (Date of Roundup)

Los Angeles *(Date)* -- Each year, improper disposal of household hazardous waste pollutes our communities and endangers the health and safety of our families. To combat the problem, a free, convenient County-sponsored Household Hazardous Waste Roundup will be held in *(City, Location, Date and Time)* for residents to properly dispose of their HHW.

“Not everyone knows that throwing unused household toxins -- like paint, household cleaners, pesticides, car batteries and used motor oil -- into the garbage or down the storm drain is illegal and can harm the health of our children, pets and the environment, said *(County Official Spokesperson)*. “Roundups offer residents a quick and easy way to properly dispose of household hazardous waste.”

“Everyone must do their part and properly dispose of their household hazardous waste to protect our families and communities from the dangerous toxins stored in our homes. We hope the

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citizens of *(City)* and surrounding communities will participate in the Roundup on *(Date)* to help keep our community healthy and clean,” added Mayor *(Name)*.

Roundups are free collection events conveniently located year-round at various sites throughout Los Angeles County where residents can properly dispose of their household hazardous waste (HHW). HHW products accepted at Roundups include: paint/varnish products, solvents, used motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides/fertilizers/herbicides, car batteries, cleaners with acid or lye, aerosol products, expired medicine and nail polish/remover. Roundups will not accept tires, radioactive materials, ammunition, explosives, trash or business waste. Residents should bring their HHW in a sturdy, leak-proof box that can be left behind. Products should not be mixed together. There is a limit of 15 gallons or 125 pounds per vehicle.

In addition to properly disposing of HHW at Roundups, follow these tips to protect your family and help keep Los Angeles County healthy and clean:

- **Buy smart!** Purchase non-toxic/less-hazardous products and only what you need. Avoid products labeled “danger,” “warning,” “do not ingest,” “corrosive,” “flammable,” or “toxic.”
- **Store properly!** Keep products out of reach of children and pets.
- **Use it up!** Finish all unused products and recycle the containers or donate leftover products to a neighbor or community group.
- **Dispose properly!** Don’t throw unused products in the trash, in the storm drain or down the drain. Dispose of household hazardous waste properly at a free Roundup.

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The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County sponsor the Household Hazardous Waste Roundup Program. An outreach element of the County's Project Pollution Prevention campaign, Roundups are part of the public education effort to target residents with messages about responsible purchasing, safe use and storage, and proper disposal of HHW to help protect the health and safety of our families, communities and the environment. For more information about the safe use and management of HHW and upcoming Roundups in your area, please call 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com.

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Sample Media Alert

MEDIA ALERT

CONTACT: *(Contact Name)*
(Contact Number)

**Got Some Paint to Get Rid of? Tired of that Nail Polish?
Have a Box Full of Old Cleaning Supplies?
Need to Get It Out of Your House?**

**Los Angeles County to Hold a Free Household Hazardous Waste Roundup
in (City) on (Date of Roundup)**

WHAT: Los Angeles County residents will have the opportunity to safely dispose of household hazardous waste -- such as used motor oil, paint, turpentine, cleaners with acid or lye, aerosol products, such as hairspray and air fresheners, car batteries, pesticides/fertilizers, nail polish/remover -- at a free, convenient County-sponsored Household Hazardous Waste Roundup.

WHO: The free Countywide Household Hazardous Waste Roundup is sponsored by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and will be hosted by *(City)*.

WHERE: *(Name of Location)*
(Street Address)
(City)

WHEN: Saturday, *(Date)*
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

WHY: Roundups are conducted year-round throughout the County to provide residents with a free and convenient place to properly dispose of the household hazardous waste (HHW) stored in their homes. An outreach element of the County's Project Pollution Prevention campaign, Roundups are part of the public education effort to target residents with messages about responsible purchasing, safe use and storage, and proper disposal of HHW to help protect the health and safety of our families, communities and the environment.

For more information regarding Roundups or the Project Pollution Prevention campaign, contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works at 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com.

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January 18, 2000

SAMPLE PITCH LETTER

(Name)

(Media Venue)

(Address)

VIA FAX: (Number)

Dear X,

Do you live in a Toxic.Free.Home?

Chances are, you *don't*. Your house needs to go on a diet to shed the 100 pounds of household hazardous waste (HHW) packed away in the garage, under the kitchen sink, in the bathroom cabinet and in the storage closet.

So what is HHW? HHW are products we use to maintain our homes, gardens and cars -- even our personal hygiene -- such as household cleaners, pesticides/fertilizers, paint, car batteries, used motor oil, medication, adhesives/glues, air freshener, hairspray and nail polish/remover.

Many LA County residents have no idea that their homes are toxic war zones, containing enough HHW to potentially injure themselves, a child or pet, and even harm the environment if not stored, used and disposed of *properly*. For example:

Each year, millions of people are accidentally poisoned in their homes, with the majority of poisonings happening to young children under the age of six years

- HHW thrown into the garbage, storm drain, sink or toilet contaminates area waterways, the Pacific Ocean and ground water, polluting recreation areas and killing wildlife

So, now that you know what HHW is and its potential hazards -- how much HHW can be found in *your home*? To find out, we would like you to consider the following ideas for one of your morning news segments:

- Take an "audit" of your home -- or the homes of several LA County residents -- to identify HHW and to determine if the amount of HHW found nears the 100 pound average
- Next, collect all of the HHW from your home and take it to a free, local collection event or "Roundup" for disposal -- you can wear a HAZMAT suit and quiz participants about the amount of HHW they think is still packed away in their house. How will the responses measure up to the amount of HHW located in your HHW house hunt?

I will follow up with you to discuss these segment ideas. In the meantime, if you have questions, or would like more information, please contact me at *(Number)* or e-mail me *(Address)*.

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Organization Name and Title)

A PROGRAM OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

SAMPLE LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR

9-8-99

To the Editor:

Marla Cone's two-part series on September 5 and 6, 1999, not only articulates the massive environmental and health problems associated with urban runoff pollution in Southern California, but brings deserved attention to the difficult task of finding remedies. The recent closure of 4.2 miles of coastline in Huntington Beach due to high levels of hazardous bacteria illustrates the costly consequences of individual and industrial polluting behaviors. While educating residents and businesses about specific polluting behaviors takes time, Los Angeles County, with the cooperation of cities within the County, has initiated both (1) aggressive construction projects, and (2) comprehensive public education campaigns to help reduce contamination and change people's polluting behaviors.

Last month, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works initiated the construction of the County's first-ever storm drain diversion system to protect beach-goers, marine life, the ocean and other natural resources. The Herondo Storm Drain Low-Flow Diversion in Redondo Beach is the first of a five diversion system series to be installed throughout the County. Additional diversion projects will begin construction this month and include the Ashland Avenue (Santa Monica), Pershing Drive and Brooks Avenue (Los Angeles) Storm Drain Low-Flow Diversions. The diversion system captures contaminated dry-weather urban runoff from storm drains and diverts it to the sewer system for treatment, thereby lessening the accumulated pollution in the storm drain system which otherwise flows untreated to the ocean and other waterways. Collectively, these four diversion systems will divert approximately 130,000 gallons

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per day of low-flow runoff in dry weather. The fifth diversion system at Alamitos Bay (Long Beach) will begin construction later in the year.

In the first six months of our public education efforts, Project Pollution Prevention, we made headway in delivering important messages, changing attitudes and reducing polluting behaviors among Los Angeles County residents. A survey conducted in June 1998 found measurable change in certain behaviors, such as: residents dropping cigarette butts on the ground decreased from one million butts per month to 800,000 per month six months later and residents washing off paint brushes under an outdoor faucet decreased from 195,000 times per month to 126,510. Bottomline: when residents are given simple action steps to prevent pollution, they will adopt them and pollute less.

Addressing pollution prevention poses great challenges because the activities most likely to cause pollution (i.e. using pesticides excessively, pouring used oil down the gutter, littering, etc.) are conducted hundreds of times a day by millions of individuals and thousands of commercial businesses. While there is no easy “fix” that will singularly prevent stormwater pollution, the County of Los Angeles has secured measurable success in communicating the message that everyone must learn to adopt pollution prevention actions in their “everyday” routines. And the County will continue to implement its programs to increase behavioral change to protect the health and wellbeing of Los Angeles County residents and the environment.

*Menerva Daoud
Program Director
Environmental Programs Division
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*

Sample Op-Ed

(Date)

If you think household hazardous waste doesn't affect you, your family or the environment -- think again. Household hazardous waste (HHW) may sound like something only the city garbage operator has to deal with, but HHW lurks in our garages, under the kitchen and bathroom sinks or in the depths of our storage closets. The health and safety of our families, communities and environment are directly affected by how Los Angeles County residents store, use and dispose of HHW.

HHW products are items we use to maintain our homes, gardens and cars -- even our personal hygiene -- such as paint/varnish products, household cleaners, pesticides and fertilizers, car batteries, used motor oil and solvents and nail polish/remover. These seemingly harmless products can seriously damage our personal health and safety and the environment if used, stored or disposed of *improperly*. For example:

- Every 30-seconds a child is poisoned in the United States. According to 1998 data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers, over 600,000 children under the age of six years were unintentionally poisoned with nonpharmaceutical products (household cleaners, fertilizers, batteries). Nearly half of these exposures can be attributed to household cleaning substances and cosmetic/personal care products.
- HHW thrown into the household garbage, down the storm drain or the sink or toilet threatens area waterways and the Pacific Ocean, contaminating ground water, polluting swimming and recreation areas and killing wildlife.

While the effects of improper storage, use and disposal of HHW are alarming, Los Angeles County residents can protect themselves, their children, pets and community from the dangers of HHW using these simple steps:

- **Buy smart!** Purchase non-toxic/less-hazardous products and only what you need. Avoid products labeled "danger," "warning," "do not ingest," "corrosive," "flammable," or "toxic."
- **Store properly!** Keep products out of reach of children and pets.
- **Use it up!** Finish all unused products and recycle the containers or donate leftover products to a neighbor or community group.
- **Dispose properly!** Don't throw unused products in the trash, in the storm drain or down the drain. Dispose of HHW properly at a free, convenient County-sponsored HHW Roundup.

All Los Angeles County residents must take steps to educate themselves and adopt these simple steps into their day-to-day use of HHW -- the health and safety of our families, communities and the environment depend on it.

For more information about the safe use and management of HHW and upcoming Roundups in your area, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works at 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com.

(Name, Title and Local Organization)

ARTICLE 1

Safe Use, Storage, Disposal

Cleaning Your Garage this Weekend? Watch Out! It Could Be Dangerous Out There

It's Saturday morning. You've had your coffee, read the paper and are ready to roll-up your sleeves and clean the garage. Today, you will finally get rid of those paint cans, the used motor oil and that really old car battery from the mini-van. All of this stuff has been sitting in the corner of your garage for nearly a year, collecting dust and taking up space.

So how are you going to dispose of this junk? Throw it in the garbage, into the gutter, down the kitchen sink? Most of us wouldn't think twice about discarding used motor oil and solvents, leftover paint/varnish products, household cleaners, pesticides and fertilizers, nail polish/remover and cosmetic products into the household garbage or down the storm drain. However, these items are considered household hazardous waste (HHW), and disposing of these products in your garbage or down the storm drain is illegal and can harm the health and safety of our families, communities and the environment.

HHW is a growing problem and it affects all of us. If HHW is used, stored or disposed of improperly -- and it often is -- the implications and impacts are serious. For example:

- Improper storage and use of HHW may pose risks to people -- especially children. According to 1998 data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers, over 600,000 children under the age of six years were unintentionally poisoned with nonpharmaceutical product (fertilizers, batteries, cleaning products). Nearly half of these exposures can be attributed to household cleaning substances and cosmetic products.
- HHW waste illegally dumped into storm drains contaminates nearby water supplies, lakes, streams and the Pacific Ocean, and can endanger the health and safety of people and animals.
- When thrown in with the regular trash, HHW goes into landfills not permitted or intended for HHW and may eventually seep into groundwater (while new landfills have liners and leachate collection systems, the majority of older landfills do not).
- When poured on the ground household hazardous waste eventually seeps into soil and contaminates our groundwater and the Pacific Ocean.
- When flushed down a toilet, sink or drain, HHW goes through the sewage system to treatment plants not equipped to handle HHW. At treatment plants, HHW interferes with the treatment process by killing bacteria and contaminating the effluent that runs into the Pacific Ocean and the sludge which is reused as fertilizer.

- When HHW is thrown on the street, it goes down storm drains leading into our area waterways, impacting the Pacific Ocean and our local beaches, and harming swimmers and aquatic life.

It's alarming that many Los Angeles County residents do not realize that many of the household products they use to clean the oven, maintain the garden, paint their nails or remodel their homes are considered toxic. But each of us can make a difference by educating ourselves as to what products are considered HHW and by following these simple steps:

BUY SMART!

- Think carefully before buying a product. Do you really need it or do you have something similar?
- Purchase non-toxic, less hazardous products and only what you need to do the job. Avoid products labeled "danger," "warning," "do not ingest," "flammable," "caution," "corrosive," "toxic" or "poison."

STORE PROPERLY!

- Keep products out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep leftover products in original labeled containers so that you can refer to directions for use and proper disposal.
- Do not reuse pesticide or chemical containers for other purposes.
- Do not repackage chemical products in containers that are normally used for food products. Children have died from drinking chemicals stored in soft drink and juice bottles.
- Do not store corrosives, flammables and poisons together -- separate these containers.
- Do not mix chemical products or wastes; dangerous chemical reactions can occur.
- Always store in a safe, dry place.

USE IT UP!

- Finish all unused products and recycle the containers or donate leftover products to a neighbor or community group.
- Do not burn used or leftover products or product containers. Burning may produce toxic fumes and contribute to air pollution.

DISPOSE PROPERLY!

- Don't throw unused hazardous products into the street, gutter, garbage or ground. Illegal dumping of HHW carries a minimum fine of \$5,000 per day per violation up to \$100,000 per day per violation and imprisonment (Section 25189.5, Health & Safety Code).
- Dispose of your HHW properly at a free and convenient Los Angeles County-sponsored Roundup. Call 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com for information about a Roundup in your area.

Follow these simple steps and help keep Los Angeles County healthy and clean. For more information about the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the Project Pollution Prevention campaign, call 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com.

ARTICLE 2

Alternative Products

Spring Cleaning 101:

How to Spring Clean Lurking Toxins Out of Your Home Look out Martha Stewart!

Remember those old wives tales your mother told you about using baking soda to clean the shower and stale beer to keep snails out of your garden? Well, guess what? They work! You should have listened to Mom to save a few bucks, save the environment and, not to mention, cut down on the 100 pounds of chemicals you've probably got stored in your garage and under the kitchen sink that can harm your family and endanger the environment.

It's a sad fact. Chemicals are a way of life in most American homes. A typical home can contain as much as 100 pounds of products used for cleaning, painting, lubricating and disinfecting the house, yard, workshop and garage, otherwise known as household hazardous wastes (HHW).

HHW is any material -- liquid, solid or gas -- discarded from the home that may, due to its chemical nature, pose a health threat to humans, animals or the environment if handled or disposed of improperly. HHW is anything labeled: *Toxic, Poison, Corrosive, Flammable, Combustible or Irritant*.

HHW stored in a single home may seem insignificant, but when tens of thousands of homes across Los Angeles County use similar products -- handling, storing and disposing of them improperly -- the combined effect becomes a *major* problem. The health and safety of people and animals, as well as the health of our communities and the environment is endangered when HHW-- such as household cleaners, paint/varnish products, pesticides and fertilizers, car batteries, used motor oil and solvents, nail polish/remover, cosmetic products and expired medicine -- are thrown out in the household garbage going to landfills, in storm drains going to area waterways and the Pacific Ocean, or in household drains going to waste water treatment plants.

Here are a few easy alternatives to HHW products that can be used for household, garden and pet maintenance. You'll be happy to know that most of these products are very common and are found in most household cabinets. Look out Martha Stewart!

ALTERNATIVE HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS:

Baking Soda: Softens and freshens fabrics. Removes stains. Cleans and deodorizes carpets, counters, drains, refrigerators, upholstery and vinyl. Extinguishes grease fires. Scours and polishes aluminum, chrome, grout, jewelry, plastic, porcelain, silver, stainless steel and tin. (NOTE: Do not mix with acids such as vinegar or lemon juice.)

Cornstarch: Polishes furniture. Removes stains. Shampoos carpets and rugs. Stretches clothes.

Lemon Juice: Deodorizes. Cleans windows and other glass. Removes stains from aluminum, clothes and porcelain.

Soap and Water: Cleans cars, clothes, dishes, doors, floors, glass, jewelry, people, pets, sporting goods, tools, walls, windows and woodwork.

Steel Wool: Removes rust, rust stains and stubborn film. Scours barbecue grills and broiler pans.

Vinegar: Cleans bricks, carpets, coffeepots, dishes, fireplaces, glass, grout, paint brushes, walls and windows. Polishes metal. Removes mildew, spots, stains and wax buildup. Softens fabric. Removes paint.

Washing Soda: Cleans and cuts grease on barbecue grills, broiler pans, concrete drains, fireplaces, floors, ovens and walls. Improves detergent power. Removes stains. Softens water.

ALTERNATIVE GARDEN AND PET PRODUCTS:

Baking Soda and Powdered Sugar: Roach pesticide. Set out in a dish of equal amounts.

Brewer s Yeast or Vitamin B: Fleas. Put small amount in pet's diet.

Eucalyptus Leaves: Flea collars or sprays. Please near pet's bed.

Spices (tartar, red chili powder, paprika, dried peppermint, cloves): Ant pesticide. Pour a line at point of entry.

Bay Leaves: Roach pesticide. Place leaves in cracks around room.

Soap and Water: Garden and houseplant insecticide. Mist/spray.

Stale Beer: Snail/slug killer. Fill a shallow pan and place in infested area.

Wood Ash, Peat Moss, Fishmeal: Use in place of chemical fertilizers.

For those of you that find it impossible to quit using your HHW products to clean your home cold turkey then, follow these simple guidelines to be safe and smart to your family, pets and the environment:

- As you make your choices about the use of hazardous and nonhazardous products, remember that the decisions consumers make affect the way manufacturers design products.
- Use products containing hazardous material and fertilizers sparingly or use non-hazardous/less hazardous alternatives.
- Before purchasing a product, read the label carefully to make sure it will do what you want it to do. Once you buy something you are also legally responsible for disposing of it properly.

- Buy just what you need to do the job. Give leftovers to a friend, neighbor, business or charity that can use them up. For example, excess pesticide might be offered to a greenhouse or garden center or paint might be offered to your child's class for art projects.
- Select water-based products over solvent-based products when available (e.g. paint, glue, shoe polish).
- Avoid aerosol sprays. Choose the pump spray or other alternatives.
- Be smart when you apply pesticides or fertilizers. Do not apply before a rain. Not only will you lose most of the pesticides or fertilizer through runoff, but also will harm the environment. Do not overwater after application. Read the label. Do not apply more than is recommended.
- Have a professional change your motor oil. You not only save yourself time and energy, but also can be sure that the used motor oil collected is recycled. If you do change your own automotive fluids, be sure to recycle them at a County-sponsored Roundup or take the fluids to a certified used oil collection center, auto parts store or service station.
- Dispose of HHW according to the directions on the container, or at a HHW event (Roundup or Hazmobile). Call 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com for a schedule of Roundups/Hazmobiles in your community or for the location of a certified used oil collection center near you.

For more information about alternative products and practices, or about the date and location of Roundups taking place in your area, please contact 1-888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com.

ARTICLE 3

HHW Health and Safety

Is Your Home a Toxic.Free.Home?

Learn How to Protect Your Family From Toxins Hiding in Your Home

You may not realize it, but your home is probably full of hazardous products that can be extremely dangerous -- even lethal -- to your child, your pet and yourself.

Every 30-seconds a child is poisoned in the United States, with sixty percent of all poisonings happening to children under the age of six. Two of the most common products involved in poisonings are household and chemical products and cosmetics. According to 1998 data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers, over 600,000 children under the age of six years were unintentionally poisoned with nonpharmaceutical products (fertilizers, arts/crafts/office supplies, adhesives/glues, cleaning products). Nearly half of these exposures can be attributed to household cleaning substances and cosmetic/personal care products.

Many Los Angeles County residents have no idea that their homes are toxic war zones that contain, on average, 100 pounds of chemicals and products considered household hazardous waste (HHW). HHW products are everyday items we use to maintain our homes, gardens and cars -- even our personal hygiene -- such as household cleaners, pesticides/fertilizers, paint, used motor-oil, medication, adhesives/glues, air freshener, hairspray and nail polish/remover.

In addition to unintentional poisonings of children by HHW, a new phenomenon is sweeping across the country and threatening the health and safety of young people, particularly in the 10-12 age bracket. Huffing, bagging and sniffing are terms used for inhalant use -- a cheap, legal and accessible way that young people are getting high.

What does this have to do with the HHW stored in your garage or under the kitchen sink?

Young people intentionally inhale household chemicals that are considered HHW -- such as air freshener, paint thinner and spray paint -- to get high at the risk of brain damage and even death. There are over 1,000 abusable products -- and they are as close as your kitchen sink or your child's classroom. According to the 1998 National Institute on Drug Abuse "Monitoring the Future Survey," almost half a million young people use inhalants in any month and at least one in every five eighth graders has intentionally inhaled household chemicals.

Inhalants are an equal opportunity form of substance abuse: they are used by young people of all economic levels and all ethnic backgrounds. Inhalants are also considered a "gateway drug," a student's first form of substance abuse prior to "graduating" to other drugs. Before eighth grade, inhalants are more popular than marijuana among students.

Using inhalants is like playing Russian Roulette: users can die the 1st, 10th or even 100th time they use. Sudden Sniffing Death can result from heart or lung failure, asphyxiation, paralysis of breathing mechanisms or accidents from being intoxicated. Long term effects of inhalant use include: brain, respiratory, liver, kidney and bone marrow damage; short-term memory loss; and hearing impairment.

So how do you make your home a Toxic.Free.Zone to prevent accidental poisonings and inhalant abuse from plaguing your family?

Follow these smart tips:

- **Buy smart!** Purchase non-toxic/less-hazardous products and only what you need. Avoid products labeled “danger,” “warning,” “do not ingest,” “corrosive,” “flammable,” or “toxic.”
- **Store properly!** Use safety locks on all cabinets and store all poisonous household and chemical products out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- **Use it up!** Finish all unused products and recycle the containers or donate leftover products to a neighbor or community group.
- **Dispose properly!** Don’t throw unused products in the trash, in the storm drain or down the drain. Dispose of HHW properly at a free, convenient County-sponsored HHW Roundup. For information on an upcoming Roundup in your area, call 888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com.
- **Be aware of inhalant abuse!** Parents and educators should be aware of the signs of inhalant use, such as: paint or stains on the body or clothing, loss of appetite or nausea, a chemical breath odor, spots or sores around the mouth and nose, red or runny eyes or nose, anxiety or a drunk and dazed appearance.
- **Educate your family!** Talk with children about the potential dangers associated with HHW products. Educate your children *before* they educate themselves.

If a poisoning does occur:

- Remain calm!
- Call the local Poison Control Center or your doctor. Have the following information ready:
 - Child’s condition
 - Name of the product and ingredients
 - How much of the product was taken
 - Time poisoning happened
 - Your name and phone number
 - Age of the poisoned child
 - Weight of the poisoned child
- The Poison Control Center or doctor will tell you what to do next.
- Be sure you know how to give first aid if a poisoning occurs.

For more information about safe use and management of HHW and the Project Pollution Prevention campaign, contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works at 888-CLEAN-LA or visit www.888cleanla.com; for more information on inhalants and the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition, call 800-269-4237; and for more information on poison prevention, contact the California Poison Control Center at 800-876-4766 or the American Association of Poison Control Centers at www.aapcc.org.